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DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

Paiute Pipeline Company

[Docket No. PF14-4-000]

**Notice of Intent to Prepare an
Environmental Assessment for the Planned
2015 Elko Area Expansion Project,
Request for Comments on Environmental Issues,
and Notice of Public Scoping Meeting**

The staff of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC or Commission) will prepare an environmental assessment (EA) that will discuss the environmental impacts of the 2015 Elko Area Expansion Project (Elko Expansion Project or Project) involving construction and operation of facilities by Paiute Pipeline Company (Paiute) in Elko County, Nevada. The Commission will use this EA in its decision-making process to determine whether the Project is in the public convenience and necessity.

This notice announces the opening of the scoping process the Commission will use to gather input from the public and interested agencies on the Project. Your input will help the Commission staff determine what issues they need to evaluate in the EA. Please note that the **scoping period will close on January 22, 2014.**

You may submit comments in written form or verbally. Further details on how to submit written comments are in the Public Participation section of this notice. In lieu of or in addition to sending written comments, the Commission invites you to attend the public scoping meeting scheduled as follows:

**FERC Public Scoping Meeting
2015 Elko Area Expansion Project
January 14, 2014 at 6:00 PM Pacific Standard Time
Elko Convention Center
700 Moren Way
Elko, Nevada 89801**

This public meeting is designed to provide you with more detailed information and another opportunity to offer your comments on the Project. Paiute representatives will be present one hour before the meeting (starting at 5:00 PM) to describe the Project, present maps, and answer questions. Interested groups and individuals are encouraged to attend the meeting and present comments on the issues they believe should be addressed in the EA. A transcript of the meeting will be made so that your comments will be accurately recorded.

This notice is being sent to the Commission's current environmental mailing list for this Project. State and local government representatives should notify their constituents of this planned Project and encourage them to comment on their areas of concern.

If you are a landowner receiving this notice, a pipeline company representative may contact you about the acquisition of an easement to construct, operate, and maintain the planned facilities. The company would seek to negotiate a mutually acceptable agreement. However, if the Commission approves the Project, that approval conveys with it the right of eminent domain. Therefore, if easement negotiations fail to produce an agreement, the pipeline company could initiate condemnation proceedings where compensation would be determined in accordance with state law.

A fact sheet prepared by the FERC entitled "An Interstate Natural Gas Facility On My Land? What Do I Need To Know?" is available for viewing on the FERC website (www.ferc.gov). This fact sheet addresses a number of typically-asked questions, including the use of eminent domain and how to participate in the Commission's proceedings.

Summary of the Planned Project

Paiute plans to construct and operate approximately 35 miles of new underground natural gas pipeline and appurtenant facilities in Elko County, Nevada, extending from the Ruby Pipeline, LLC (Ruby) Wieland Flat Compressor Station facility to Paiute's existing Elko Lateral at its Elko City Gate. The purpose of the Project is to provide about 21,994 dekatherms per day to the Elko area to meet the growth requirements of existing shippers served by Paiute's transmission system.

The planned Elko Expansion Project would consist of the following facilities:

- approximately 35 miles of 8-inch-diameter lateral natural gas pipeline;
- the Ruby Interconnect Station, at Ruby's Wieland Flat Compressor Station;
- a pressure limiting station (PLS) to be tied into Paiute's existing Elko 6-inch-diameter pipeline lateral; and
- valves and various appurtenances.

The general location of the project facilities is shown in Appendix 1.¹

Construction work is scheduled to start in the 2nd Quarter of 2015 and the projected in-service date of the Project is November 2015.

¹ The appendices referenced in this notice will not appear in the Federal Register. Copies of the appendices were sent to all those receiving this notice in the mail and are available at www.ferc.gov using the link called "eLibrary" or from the Commission's Public Reference Room, 888 First Street NE, Washington, DC 20426, or call (202) 502-8371. For instructions on connecting to eLibrary, refer to the last page of this notice.

Land Requirements for Construction

Construction of the planned facilities would disturb about 419.2 acres of land for the aboveground facilities and the pipeline. Following construction, Paiute would maintain about 209.5 acres for permanent operation of the Project's facilities; the remaining acreage would be restored and revert to former uses. About 62 percent of the planned pipeline route parallels existing road rights-of-way. Approximately 57 percent of the planned pipeline route traverses federal land managed by the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Elko District Office.

The EA Process

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires the Commission to take into account the environmental impacts that could result from an action whenever it considers the issuance of a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity. NEPA also requires us² to discover and address concerns the public may have about proposals. This process is referred to as scoping. The main goal of the scoping process is to focus the analysis in the EA on the important environmental issues. By this notice, the Commission requests public comments on the scope of the issues to address in the EA. We will consider all filed comments during the preparation of the EA.

In the EA, we will discuss impacts that could occur as a result of the construction and operation of the planned Project under these general headings:

- geology, paleontology, and soils;
- water resources, fisheries, and wetlands;
- vegetation and wildlife;
- endangered and threatened species;
- land use;
- cultural resources;
- visual resources;
- recreation;
- air quality and noise;
- public safety; and,
- cumulative impacts.

We will also evaluate possible alternatives to the planned Project or portions of the Project, and make recommendations on how to lessen or avoid impacts on the various resource areas.

² "We," "us," and "our" refer to the environmental staff of the Commission's Office of Energy Projects.

Although no formal application has been filed, we have already initiated our NEPA review under the Commission's pre-filing process. The purpose of the pre-filing process is to encourage early involvement of interested stakeholders and to identify and resolve issues before the FERC receives an application. As part of our pre-filing review, we have begun to contact some federal and state agencies to discuss their involvement in the scoping process and the preparation of the EA.

The EA will present our independent analysis of the issues. The EA will be available in the public record through eLibrary. Depending on the comments received during the scoping process, we may also publish and distribute the EA to the public for an allotted comment period. We will consider all comments on the EA before we make our recommendations to the Commission. To ensure we have the opportunity to consider and address your comments, please carefully follow the instructions in the Public Participation section beginning on page 5.

With this notice, we are asking agencies with jurisdiction by law and/or special expertise with respect to the environmental issues related to this project to formally cooperate with us in the preparation of the EA³. Agencies that would like to request cooperating agency status should follow the instructions for filing comments provided under the Public Participation section of this notice. The BLM indicated that it plans to be a cooperating agency in the preparation of the EA because the Project would cross federally administered lands in Nevada. As a cooperating agency, the BLM intends to adopt the EA per Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1506.3 to meet its responsibilities under NEPA regarding Paiute's application for a Right-of-Way Grant and Temporary Use Permit for crossing federally administered lands. Impacts on resources and programs, and the proposed Project's conformance with land use plans, will be considered in the BLM's decision.

Consultations Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

In accordance with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's implementing regulations for Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, we are using this notice to initiate consultation with the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and to solicit their views and those of other government agencies, interested Indian tribes, and the public on the Project's potential effects on historic properties.⁴ We will define the Project-specific Area of Potential Effects (APE) in consultation with the SHPO as the Project develops. On natural gas facility projects, the APE at a minimum encompasses all areas subject to ground disturbance (examples include construction right-of-way, contractor/pipe storage yards, interconnection stations, and access roads). Our EA for

³ The Council on Environmental Quality regulations addressing cooperating agency responsibilities are at Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1501.6.

⁴ The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation regulations are at Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 800. Those regulations define historic properties as any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

this project will document our findings on the impacts on historic properties and summarize the status of consultations under Section 106.

Currently Identified Environmental Issues

We have already identified several issues that we think deserve attention based on a preliminary review of the planned facilities and the environmental information provided by Paiute. This preliminary list of issues may change based on your comments and our analysis.

- Geology – Effects as a result of blasting to remove existing surface and bedrock during Project construction.
- Biological Resources – Effects on threatened and endangered species and sensitive habitats potentially occurring within or adjacent to the Project right-of-way.
- Land Use – Effects on private lands, public lands managed by the BLM, and traffic and transportation corridors from construction of Project facilities.
- Cultural Resources - Effects on archaeological sites and historic resources.
- Reliability and Safety - The assessment of hazards associated with natural gas pipelines and aboveground facilities.
- Recreation – Effects of establishing a new right-of-way and new access roads thereby potentially opening up a new area to recreational use.
- Vegetation Management – Effects related to the potential of an increase in invasive and noxious weeds resulting from establishing a new right-of-way.
- Visual Resources – Effects on visual resources during the construction and operation of the planned Project.

Public Participation

You can make a difference by providing us with your specific comments or concerns about the Project. Your comments should focus on the potential environmental effects, reasonable alternatives, and measures to avoid or lessen environmental impacts. The more specific your comments, the more useful they will be. To ensure that your comments are timely and properly recorded, please send your comments so that the Commission receives them in Washington, DC on or before **January 22, 2014**.

For your convenience, there are three methods you can use to submit your comments to the Commission. In all instances, please reference the Project docket number (PF14-4-000) with your submission. The Commission encourages electronic filing of comments and has expert staff available to assist you at (202) 502-8258 or efiling@ferc.gov.

- (1) You can file your comments electronically using the [eComment](#) feature located on the Commission's website (www.ferc.gov) under the link to [Documents and Filings](#). This is an easy method for interested persons to submit brief, text-only comments on a project;
- (2) You can file your comments electronically using the [eFiling](#) feature located on the Commission's website (www.ferc.gov) under the link to [Documents and Filings](#). With eFiling, you can provide comments in a variety of formats by attaching them as a file with your submission. New eFiling users must first create an account by clicking on “[eRegister](#).” You must select the type of filing you are making. If you are filing a comment on a particular project, please select “Comment on a Filing”; or
- (3) You can file a paper copy of your comments by mailing them to the following address:

Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street NE, Room 1A
Washington, DC 20426

Environmental Mailing List

The environmental mailing list includes federal, state, and local government representatives and agencies; elected officials; environmental and public interest groups; Native American Tribes; other interested parties; and local libraries and newspapers. This list also includes all affected landowners (as defined in the Commission’s regulations) who are potential right-of-way grantors, whose property may be used temporarily for Project purposes, or who own homes within certain distances of aboveground facilities, and anyone who submits comments on the Project. We will update the environmental mailing list as the analysis proceeds to ensure that we send the information related to this environmental review to all individuals, organizations, and government entities interested in and/or potentially affected by the planned project.

If we publish and distribute the EA, copies of completed EA will be sent to the environmental mailing list for public review and comment. **If you would prefer to receive a paper copy of the document instead of the CD version or would like to remove your name from the mailing list, please return the attached Information Request (Appendix 2).**

Becoming an Intervenor

Once Paiute files its application with the Commission, you may want to become an “intervenor,” which is an official party to the Commission’s proceeding. Intervenors play a more formal role in the process and are able to file briefs, appear at hearings, and

be heard by the courts if they choose to appeal the Commission's final ruling. An intervenor formally participates in the proceeding by filing a request to intervene. Instructions for becoming an intervenor are in the User's Guide under the "e-filing" link on the Commission's website. Please note that the Commission will not accept requests for intervenor status at this time. You must wait until the Commission receives a formal application for the project.

Additional Information

Additional information about the Project is available from the Commission's Office of External Affairs, at **(866) 208-FERC**, or on the FERC website (www.ferc.gov) using the eLibrary link. Click on the eLibrary link, click on "General Search" and enter the docket number, excluding the last three digits in the Docket Number field (i.e., PF14-4). Be sure you have selected an appropriate date range. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support at FercOnlineSupport@ferc.gov or toll free at (866) 208-3676, or for TTY, contact (202) 502-8659. The eLibrary link also provides access to the texts of formal documents issued by the Commission, such as orders, notices, and rulemakings.

In addition, the Commission offers a free service called eSubscription that allows you to keep track of all formal issuances and submittals in specific dockets. This can reduce the amount of time you spend researching proceedings by automatically providing you with notification of these filings, document summaries, and direct links to the documents. Go to www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/esubscription.asp.

Finally, public meetings or site visits will be posted on the Commission's calendar located at www.ferc.gov/EventCalendar/EventsList.aspx along with other related information.

Dated: December 23, 2013.

Kimberly D. Bose,
Secretary.

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